******

|  |
| --- |
| **NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE** | Updated May 2016 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Subcommittee  on  Recommendations | NAC Recommendations Guide |



**Introduction**

The National Advisory Committee (NAC) of the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) was established by VA Circular No. 117, May 17, 1947, and became a federally chartered advisory committee on February 5, 1975.

The Committee provides advice to the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), through the Under Secretary for Health, on the coordination and promotion of volunteer activities within VA health care facilities, in the community, and on other matters relating to volunteerism; and keeps the officers and members of participating organizations informed of volunteer needs and accomplishments.

All recommendations approved by the NAC at its annual meeting are transmitted to the Secretary of VA by the Under Secretary for Health and responded to in writing by the Department. A majority vote of the NAC Service Member organizations constitutes the recommendations of the Committee. A member may file a minority report of the Committee's recommendations.

The NAC Executive Committee monitors and performs oversight of the NAC membership policies and procedures. Voluntary Service Office is responsible for implementation, recruitment and membership application processing.

As described in our standard operating procedures and our charter, we are charged with the responsibility to provide quality recommendations for the improvement of volunteer services. In order to fulfill this obligation, we must understand how to write a recommendation in its entirety. It is imperative to have a fully developed recommendation, so that we can make informed decisions based upon quality information and deliberation.

This guide is going to serve as the basis for creating a solid recommendation. If at any time you are experiencing difficulties writing the recommendation or need assistance with formatting or editing, please contact the recommendations subcommittee chairperson; contact information is on the Recommendations Call Memo and available from the VAVS staff located at VA Central Office.

**Format**

During the NAC Executive Meeting in the spring of 2015, the Director of the VA Advisory Committee Meeting Office shared the “SMART Recommendation” template to help improve results. The template clarifies exactly what is expected and the measures used to determine if the recommendation is successfully implemented and end-state achieved. Include the following on your submission and follow the template below:

1. **Organizational Letterhead**
   * NAC member organization
2. **Title**
   * Describes in a short phrase what the recommendation is about

**The template uses the acronym S.M.A.R.T. meaning**:

**Specific (and strategic)**: Linked to department’s mission, position summary, strategic plan or committee charter. Answers the question—Who? and What?

**Measurable:** Can the success toward accomplishing the recommendation be measured. Answers the question—How?

**Actionable:** Can the recommendation be achieved through reasonable action and reasonable invest of resources.

**Realistic (results oriented):** Is the recommendations within scope or can it be aligned with current mission tasks, projects or initiatives…does it focus in one defined area; does the recommendation include a desirable result or end-state.

**Time framed:** Does the recommendations have a clearly defined time-frame; a target or deadline.

*Examples:*

A poor SMART recommendation:

* VA should improve employee communicating skills.

*Does not identify a specific measurement, time frame, nor identify why the improvement is needed or how it will be used.*

A better SMART recommendation:

* The Department should work to rapidly deploy outreach multipliers/enablers like expanding the number of full trained public affairs officers and deploying them more frequently, allotting more individual employee public engagement skills training hours to maximize one on one Veteran knowledge provider opportunities, dedicating more VA senior leader to conduct public outreach / issues interviews (TV, Radio, Print) and expand the functionality of enterprise web pages to better reach and inform stakeholder audiences. VA should complete this recommendation by January 2018 and annually publish the results by March of each year between 2016-2018.

EXAMPLE SMART RECOMMENDATIONS – TEMPLATE

Specific – WHO? WHAT?

Measurement/Assessment – HOW?

Actionable – REASONABLE?

Realistic – DESIRED RESULT?

Timed – WHEN?

**Reviewing the Document**

Once you have completed writing the document, you should go through a solid review process. Ask at least two individuals to read over your recommendation for both clarity and grammar. As the author of the document, an individual can easily overlook errors which can be spotted by others.

Additionally, the author can easily talk about what he or she is trying to accomplish with a recommendation, but if he or she is not present during the discussion, clear writing is imperative. If the recommendation is not written clearly enough, it may not be approved by the National Advisory Committee; therefore, it is important to check for clarity.

We hope this guide is helpful and are open to suggestions from the NAC membership to improve the process.